Tees Valley Local Access Forum Minutes

30th June 2016, 4:00-6:00pm Kingsway House, Billingham

Present: Yvonne Ramage (Chair), Rob Brown (Vice Chair), Mike Roff (Vice Chair), Chris Scaife, Malcolm Thompson, Beryl Bird, Councillor Carson, David Reed, Christine Corbett, Paul Harman, Rob Morrow, Tom Watson - River Tees Re-discovered.

Apologies: Fiona Campbell, Judith Underwood, Graham Clingan, Councillor Rooney, Deborah Jefferson, Robin Daniels, Stewart Williams, Mike Cherrett, Councillor Sylvia Tempest, Graham Clingan.

1. Introductions and Welcome

Yvonne Ramage (YR) welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular Paul Harman as our latest member and Tom Watson, Partnership Manager RTR.

2. Apologies – as above.

3. Thanks to Robin Daniels

As Robin was on holiday, it was agreed to postpone this to the next meeting.

4. Ratification of meeting held 8th March 2016

All agreed the Minutes reflected the meeting.

5. Matters arising

- 5.1 YR outlined the latest position with regard to Natural England and their withdrawal of support for LAFs in the north east. The letter outlining the TVLAF Chairs view was previously circulated and we await a response from the Area Manager of Natural England, Brad Tooze. Both CS and MT expressed a view that it was not an issue with Jim Milner, and at the recent regional ADEPT (Assoc of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport) meeting the Officers believed Natural England would be withdrawing activity across the access sector, also echoed at the National Trails Partnership Meeting held in Birmingham
- 5.2 The next meeting of the Regional Chairs would be held on the 6th July in Newcastle and Yvonne would attend.
- 5.3 Awaiting the guidance notes from Heritage Lottery BB had reminded the HLF of the outcome of the joint meeting held earlier in the year.

6. Teesdale Way – a Way Forward

YR welcomed Tom Watson, the new Partnership Manager of River Tees Re-discovered to the meeting. Yvonne described the presentation made by Graham Clingan to the AGM and the ambition for the Teesdale Way to become a National Trail but recognised the probable unlikelihood of that. Tom Watson, now three months into the role is already in discussion with the HLF about how best to promote the route, and needs to have similar discussions with the relevant Local Authorities, local businesses and local people.

CS believes the route is already part of 2 National Trials – the Pennine Way and the England Coast Path; it is also part of E2, a European Long Distance Route. So the route is part of a far larger network, as well as being part of the relevant local authorities RoW network. PH thought the trail needs to link to town centres, spurs with appropriate signage (the Dipper) with signposting circular routes off. MR thought there should be a link into Darlington, at present this was un-signposted – Durham CC needs to be part of the discussions. CS believes we should be linking to new projects – adding value. YR thought there should be professional promotion of the route. All agreed it needed to be web based and RM agreed to forward the costings of re-producing the existing leaflet on to BB.

A number of lines of discussion ensured about what was required on such a web site, including the ability to be added to - a map, walking guide open access data, natural sites, volunteer groups sections, heritage sites, places to stay, the addition of potentially copyrighted RoW material from the D&S, the Arriva bus app., disabled access sites, cycling links, Bridleway sections, links to amongst others to the Long Distance Walkers Association and Trail Runners. It was clear that such an ambitious project could only be developed over time; YR thought the TVLAF would support this very positive initiative and thanked Tom for his positive contribution to the discussion.

Action: TW thought links could be made with the Heart of Teesdale HLF to address the signage in Darlington to Piercebridge but as this was now winding down, he agreed to see what could be established with Groundwork/HLF/DCC.

YR thought we could approach Durham LAF, to see if they could also suggest a solution. TW volunteered to host and develop a Teesdale Way web site, initially requesting a definition of what was required to be included and relevant input from the TVLAF.

7. Traffic Lights for Dogs

CS described the latest development with this project. Papers have been circulated. RB thought the process may take longer than a year to be effective. MR said if he understood the outline of the project, these attacks occurred from dogs which were not strays, but were with walkers and were out of control. CS confirmed this and described the 'twilight community' which would probably move on to other areas once the project was underway. It was a slow process but could be used and adapted. CC thought that once underway enforcement of the PSPO could take place after any further incidents, and CS agreed – the process is reactive, and will be managed by Hartlepool Police.

A discussion about appropriate RoW with livestock signage took place, metal – too costly, stencils could be added by volunteers, or signage added – 'this trail is kept tidy by...'. YR thought the project was a very inventive way of approaching this problem and hoped it would be successful.

Action: CS/RB to update the next meeting on progress.

8. Ten Minute Training - PSPO

It was agreed to postpone this to a later meeting.

9. Standing Items - River Tees re-discovered

CC outlined the 26 Guided Walks organised, which were now 50% completed; 23 were family orientated, and participant numbers ranged from 2-26. Healthy Stepping Walks, Discover Middlesbrough with Redcar and Cleveland Walking Festival, working with local historians, linking to Becks, railways and stations were all described. CC updated the meeting about a new river boat, the 'Juno' – travelling from Preston Park to Yarm every hour during the summer. RM apologised to CC about sections of the footpath near Aislaby; he has had no grass cutting support for three months, but has taken steps to address this with a local landowner. YR thanked CC for her update.

10. AOB

10.1 Path Watch

RM described the type of reports received during the operation of the Ramblers project Path Watch, a sample included problems with other Authorities paths, missing signage in overgrown hedges and muddy paths in December. However those issues reported of relevance were being acted upon.

DR thought the point was that the path had been walked, and in some cases it was difficult to find paths; YR confirmed that the paths couldn't disappear from the maps. 10.2 Stockton on Tees Grass cutting

Rob has been struggling for grass cutting support since NACRO closed in February. He has requested support from the Highways team, and has begun discussions with local landowners to cut sections of adjacent paths. MR described a letter received from his local Parish Council requesting he and his friends desist from cutting paths and picking litter as they had neither the appropriate training nor PPE. Both RM and MT described the legislative cover in place managed by both NACRO and the Community Payback teams. CC described a recent initiative in Darlington where Councillors are required to assist volunteers within their wards cleaning the streets of Darlington.

10.3 Snipe Pond

PH invited members to the official opening of Snipe Pond on the 23.7.16 at 11.00am with thanks to DBC/ Cummins/Groundwork, where paths have been connected and surface improvements made. The site is also linked to an art project co-sponsored by Tees Valley Arts and River Tees Re-discovered which will be opened later this summer.

11. Date of next meeting

29th September 2016 at Summerhill, Hartlepool, 4:00pm - 5:30pm.

Meeting closed at 5.50pm